

Puget Power Plans \$35 Million Project

The Federal Power Commission yesterday issued a license to Puget Sound Power & Light Company to construct a \$35,000,000 Upper Baker River power dam, and the upriver town of Concrete immediately began wrestling with the problems which will result from the construction boom.

The site of the second dam on the Baker River will be eight miles north of Concrete.

Its construction plus additional installations at Puget Power's present Lower Baker River project will mean an increase of 140,000 kilowatts in power generation on the Baker.

The new dam will be 300 feet high, 200 feet wide, will be constructed of concrete with a straight gravity section, and will be 1,200 feet long with a 12-foot wide road across its top.

The construction boom is certain to affect the Skagit Valley and most directly the town of Concrete. For while the dam site is in Whatcom County, it can be reached only via the Baker River Road which starts at Concrete.

At the peak of construction some 1,500 men will be employed by Stone and Webster, Inc., the construction firm which will build the dam. Many of those workers will be housed in construction camps. But the problem of providing quarters and facilities for the employes still is certain to present a formidable problem to the Upper Skagit Valley.

Eyes Housing

Ed Monrad, Concrete businessman and past president of the Upper Skagit Valley Booster Club, said this morning that "right now we are trying to figure out how we are going to put up just 35 engineers and officials who will be arriving in the next two weeks. There just isn't any empty housing in town, and the communities further down the valley also have their problems."

Monrad said he was "shocked" by a poor turnout for a booster club meeting last night—only seven persons appeared — at which discussion of how the community is to solve the housing and other problems which will be posed by the dam project was highlighted.

"We are going to have to work together up here to meet the challenge ahead," said Monrad, who presided over last night's meeting. "These workers and their families are going to have to have homes. And we want good housing—not cheap, quick projects."

Monrad added that the boosters are hoping that many upper valley residents will provide apartments and rooms in their homes for the construction workers.

A total payroll of \$11,000,000 will be paid out to workmen on the upper and lower river projects.

"The stage is set so that construction can start immediately and move full speed ahead in anticipation of a 1959 completion date," Frank McLaughlin, company president, said yesterday in Seattle. "This is the largest power development project Puget has ever undertaken."

Behind the new dam a reservoir some nine miles long and storing 980,000,000 gallons of water will be created. North of the dam a dike 1,260 feet long and 50 feet high, requiring 270,000 cubic yards of earth and rock fill will be constructed.

120-Foot Powerhouse

The powerhouse, 120 feet long by 60 feet wide, and intake section will be located at the base of the dam in the main channel of the river. Two water wheels of 60,000 horsepower each, operating on an average head of 275 feet, and two generators of 42,500 kilowatts each will be provided.

The U.S. Forestry Service, in anticipation of the approval by the government to let the company build the dam, already has started sales to loggers of the timber in the nine-mile-long basin that will be flooded by the dam.

Though the first engineers are due to arrive sometime next week, company officials today were unable to put their finger on a starting date, saying only that construction would start "as soon as we get organized."

The engineering figures involved in the project are staggering. Some 1,200,000 tons of concrete will be poured. It is thought likely that the cement plant in Concrete of the Superior Portland Cement, Inc., will get the major share of that contract.